5

Transforming, misremembering, forgetting

While adult readers often express ambivalence about their remembered encounters with childhood literature and their experiences of revisiting them, a positive discourse that stresses the pleasures and benefit of reading in youth underlies many of the autobiographical accounts and interviews I have gathered. This is perhaps not surprising, since I have selected memoirs by those already committed to children's literature, and have interviewed those who are generally self-selecting as avid lifelong readers. In his personal account of childhood reading, Richard Adams exemplifies something of the general attitude I have noticed:

> Reading was highly reassuring. It was the perfect escape – into other worlds which often seemed more valid and valuable than the real one [. . .] And the thing that happened in books didn't evanesce, like last Christmas or yesterday's picnic. They [*sic*] stayed put, to become familiar, to be re-experienced as often as you wanted; and as they were dwelt on they grew in grace and power [. . .] The permanence of books and the memorability of dialogue are well up among the most supportive things I have ever found. (1990, p. 100)

Adams's words reflect the way he locates childhood books within the pattern of his everyday life and develops a bond with them that has aesthetic and emotional potency. As I have suggested in earlier chapters, childhood books also work as permanent artefacts against which memory can be tested. Unlike many phenomenological experiences, such as eating the consumable items of a picnic, some small part of the original reading act can be compared with response to the same text many years later. As Margaret Mackey puts it, 'however faulty my memory, the books and other materials I encountered in my youth have not materially changed' (2016, p. 12). Nevertheless, Adams's claim that the contents of books 'stay put' cannot always be supported. There is, in the first instance, the basic poststructuralist tenet that every literary work is 'eternally written here and now' and will yield multiple meanings for each reader through individual readings and rereadings (Barthes, 1977, p. 145). Beyond this destabilizing premise, there are also many tangible ways in which specific material objects encountered in childhood might transmute into something strange and new for the returning adult, as well as instances when permanent memories dissolve and books are forgotten completely.

In this final chapter I turn to black holes in the reading scene; those shadows that are cast, not from the ideological and aesthetic disconnect that might occur between child and adult readings as discussed in the last chapter, but from transformations, inaccuracies, gaps, and silences that emerge when adults return to childhood books that are not the same in material terms, or when they misremember or fail to remember significant aspects of those texts. For archaeologists, a black hole is 'a significant absence of specific data in a synchronic landscape' (Groube, 1981, p. 189); for those excavating memories of childhood books, the data around certain texts or reading moments can be frustratingly fragile and surprisingly revealing of the surrounding autotopography. As Walter Benjamin suggests, excavations require a plan, but 'no less indispensable is the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam' (1932/1999, p. 611).

To tackle these errors and absences, I will make use of my earlier discussions of memory and its

limitations as well as existing critical work from translation, adaptation, and transmediation studies, which is useful for understanding ways in which texts themselves transmute and proliferate in tangible ways. A structuralist methodology of examining gaps and attending to the 'strangeness' of ordinary texts, and Freudian alertness to slips and false memories, provide other entry points for thinking about childhood reading experiences and 'transformed texts' as inherently foreign and unfamiliar. There is an additional mass of early reading encounters that seems to be lost from memory, and a final aim in this chapter is to theorize those personal lost paracanons of forgotten childhood books. It is worth thinking about the value of forgetting as a philosophical stance and as a practical attitude towards the shaping of a life narrative that includes books as a major ingredient. I will end by asking whether the practice of *anamnesis* – of the active recovery of knowledge from a previous life – is possible or even ethically sound in this context.

Transformed texts

Childhood books occupy a particularly unstable position in the 'literary polysystem', a model of hierarchies proposed by Itamar Even-Zohar (1979) that has an acknowledged canon at its centre and locates children's literature at the periphery. Accordingly, translators, abridgers, and adapters of classic children's titles are more likely to 'manipulate the integrality of the original text' (Shavit, 1981, p. 174) than they might in the system of adult literature, respecting authorship and literary genealogy rather less, while recognizing the great potential for a popular store of narratives. This situation is also true in the case of adapting adult books into the children's system, because these texts need to be 'adapted to the child's level of comprehension (as the adults understand it), or to the moral norms which are allowed in the children's system' (p. 174). The 'original childhood book' in the lifelong reading act should thus be understood as a book as it was originally experienced by the remembering reader, often – if not always – in abridged, adapted, transmediated, or translated versions, and not necessarily the text in its source language, original shape, or full character as it might be recognized by literary critics. Longstanding conventions of manipulating childhood books – both children's classics and crossover texts from adult publishing – have in some cases resulted in questionable practice, reducing the complex and original work of established authors and illustrators to simplistic plot and character as well as erasing key traditions, locations, or contexts in cultural translation. At the same time, 'there is also great potential for literary creativity in translating or retelling well-known tales for children', as Gillian Lathey has noted (2015, p. 113), and transformation of any kind can be the start of new meaning that means 'interacting with the child, listening and responding' in a kind of ethics of translation (Oittinen, 2014, p. 35).

As I intimated in Chapter 2, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe is regularly remembered by adult memoirists in terms that suggest familiarity with one of the chapbook versions of Defoe's novel rather than with the original source. Charles Dickens's nostalgic memory of encountering the book in boyhood requires him to journey backwards through the plot of the full text to reach something more reminiscent of a children's adaptation, for instance. He explains, 'the colony [Crusoe] established on [the island] soon faded away, and it is uninhabited by any descendants of the grave and courteous Spaniards, or of Will Atkins and the other mutineers, and has relapsed into its original condition. Not a twig of its wicker houses remains, its goats have long run wild again' (Dickens, 1860/1958, p. 148). This is a form of remembering that is more akin to forgetting, as significant aspects of Defoe's tale are erased one by one and only the truly resonant images remain: the hilltop, the sandy beach, the cave, the hut, and the powerful image of that 'memorable footstep' (p. 148). The aspects of the text that bring a political or

social flavour are, as in many children's editions, omitted from this version, but the memory of the original childhood book retains its resonance for the remembering adult.

Such 'shadow canons' of well-known works of fiction have continued to make up a huge part of the children's book trade and maintain their prevalence throughout the twentieth century, along with other forms of textual transformation. There are clear distinctions to be made between abridgements and other types of adaptation or transmediation as well as cultural and linguistic translations, and I do not wish to conflate these different creative endeavours or suggest that they all work in the same way within the economy of children's literature publishing. For the purposes of this chapter, however, they share something in common in terms of their effects on reading response. I use the term *transformed texts* to describe all such childhood books that differ in original childhood encounters from subsequent adult rereadings. In most cases that I report on here, movement is from adapted version in childhood towards original source version in adulthood, although the direction could just as easily be reversed and is not always immediately evident or straightforward. Adaptations and abridgements made with child readers in mind often resonate with power and clarity in the mind of the remembering adult – as a simplified retelling of *Robinson Crusoe* seems to have done for Dickens – and rereading the original or complete version later in life can be a challenging endeavour, involving new affective responses. The same effect can take hold when a translated text is read in its source language: for instance, Judith Kerr lived in Germany for the first ten years of her life and admits that she did not realize that nearly all the books she read in German as a child had originally been written in English (1992/2015, p. 53). In her account of rereading Hugh Lofting's *Dr Doolittle* books (1920–52) in English she explains a certain level of uncomfortable readjustment and some rejection of Lofting's terminologies, since for her the pushmi-pullyu 'was always a *Stossmichziehdich*' (p. 52).[1] Recognition of cultural markers and differences offers one set of clues as to how transformed texts can lodge themselves in particular ways into the lifelong reading act. On the whole, adults rereading texts originally published in a language other than English are likely to encounter the same translations they read when they were children, as retranslations in English are rare. Classics represent the exception, however, and remembering adults may find themselves confronted with recollections of a different translation to the one they have accessed to reread, or an abridged version of that translation. Similar shadowy terrain must be tackled when transmediation is at work, and sometimes whether a childhood book is recalled via its textual form or through its televisual or filmic form is not necessarily clear either to the rereading adult or to me as researcher.

Such encounters, although common in the lifelong reading act, rarely feature explicitly in 'official' reading histories and narratives. Problems are certainly highlighted by a number of autobibliographers, such as Hugh Crago (who I will return to later), but most tend to relate to questions of rereading attitude towards a previous childhood self, in the ways I explained in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I have therefore worked in the most part with parallel texts produced through the interviews I conducted with participants in my rereading project. In contrast to published memoirs, these interviews could be used to actively guide rereaders to examine some of the more unstable elements of remembering and rereading transformed texts.

Structuralist methodology is useful in analysing these accounts and looking beyond 'manifest content' (Culler, 1975/2002, p. 304) in order to isolate the codes at play in remembering and rereading. Jonathan Culler argues that critics are most successful when they turn to conventional and familiar works from another period, which 'make considerable use of traditional codes' and which 'contain large portions of "shadow" ' (p. 305). It is in these kinds of texts that critics can best attend to the 'strangeness' that naturally permeates their fabric and by doing so, can capture something of the 'force' of literature itself (p. 304). Adult re-encounters with childhood books can be partly conceptualized as engagement with

conventional texts existing within another historical period, that is, an earlier phase of the lifelong reading act. In this sense, they might be considered in the light of feelings of estrangement from initial ideological, literary, and stylistic conceptions of those childhood books. Alternatively, accounts of remembering and rereading might be interpreted as conventional texts themselves, as intimate narratives of a familiar past self, by the adults who have created them and who may feel more or less in touch with that previous readerly identity. Such narratives, especially the gaps and black holes within them, are open to interpretation.

By approaching memories of transformed texts in the context of strangeness, shadows can be revealed and meaning identified. This is quite different from Perry Nodelman's use of the term 'shadow text' to represent a virtual text that an ideal reader might access 'by reading the actual simple text in the context of the repertoire of previously existing knowledge about life and literature it seems to demand and invite readers to engage in' (2008, p. 77). For Nodelman, the shadow represents the shading of an expert eye and life experience that an adult might bring to a children's text, rather than the dark spaces and murky corners of the reading scene. Culler's statements and approach thus offer a framework for thinking about how adults approach texts from the past as 'strange' in different ways, not as repositories of shadow meanings necessarily, but as signifiers of shadows that materialize in the lifelong reading act, as readers are faced with alternative versions of the objects they once read or misremember childhood books. As I will show through a series of extended case studies in the rest of this chapter, there is substantial evidence of the force that such texts continue to exert over time, even if – or sometimes especially if – the processes of remembering and rereading reveal significant disparity and confusion. Probing the black holes that appear in the reading scene offers a way of understanding childhood reading as it works in direct contrast to Adams's autobiographical picture of reassurance and familiarity. I begin with readers' responses to material changes in the books they remember reading as children, exploring the importance of the physical object and embodied reading, before turning to texts transformed by translation and transmediation, including Johann David Wyss's *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812) and Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (1884). Finally I will consider a case in which it is the reader's memories – and not the texts – that appear strange and unstable.

Material mismatches

The book as transformed object, as well as other non-textual artefacts, form part of the backdrop of memories in the reading scene. As Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo explain, reading can be understood 'as involving more processes and actions than a hermeneutic practice or a text-reader transaction' (2013, p. 37) and I have shown in previous chapters that adults sometimes remember illustration or cover art and other paratextual elements, including transmediations, as much as – or more than – they recall textual content. Merchandise, film or TV adaptations, and other such cultural items circulating around children's literature contribute to the accounts of remembering adults, diluting, or enriching their memory scenes, and just as often causing confusion. Indeed, when accounts dwell on the mismatch between remembered materiality and revisited reality, a common theme of disconnection and dislocation emerges: there are regular complaints from participants about different editions with different cover art or illustrations, or even the same edition but not the self-same childhood copy with its personal annotations and colourings.

Most often, disparity in the visual elements of the original and reread texts provoke the strongest

feelings of disjuncture in the reader, destabilizing what one of my participants, Victoria, called the 'beckoning power' of a childhood front cover. For example, Martha's rereading of Enid Blyton's *The Magic Faraway Tree* (1943) is influenced by the 2007 Egmont edition that she uses for the project. This has different cover art to the edition she owned as a child, which contained the original illustrations by Dorothy M. Wheeler. The cover of her rereading copy, created by Paul Hess, depicts a brightly coloured scene with the magical tree foregrounded, but Martha admits that this does not beckon her and she prefers the central position of the children in the cover art of her childhood version: the new image 'just doesn't have the same impact on me'. Similarly, she recalls that Wheeler's illustrations appealed to her as a child because of their realistic rendering of character, while Jan McCafferty's modern pictures in the Egmont edition are 'too much like a cartoon'. It is not certain whether Martha's taste has remained consistent over the course of her life or whether the desire for nostalgic pleasure plays a part in her disappointment as a rereading adult. Since Martha reports that she could not help but be drawn to the new illustrations and that their jarring difference made her stop reading to examine them (this 'did actually distract me from the story a little'), it is apparent that the impact of this transformation goes beyond provocation of nostalgic dismay and affects the phenomenological process of rereading itself.

Another of my participants, Sue, reports on a dramatic sense of dislocation on choosing to reread Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868). She obtains the 1957 Dean's Classics abridged edition because she knows she owned a number of these titles throughout her childhood in the 1960s and 1970s. However, on receiving the copy she says she is unfamiliar with the cover art. In fact, she recalls *Little Women* fairly scantily, merely as a story of four sisters, and during the reread she becomes '99% sure' that she never actually tackled the novel as a child after all. We discuss the possibility that she had perhaps attempted to read the first chapter as a girl and then discarded the book because she became bored, or that she had read an even more severely abridged version that bore little resemblance to the Dean's text and which gave her some knowledge of the characters and plot but no experience of Alcott's narrative style (highly simplified versions of the story 'retold' by Mary Farrer, Josephine Page and Margorie Rowe were all published when Sue was a girl). There is a chance that Sue heard other children discussing the story and subsequently felt she had experienced it first hand: a case of what Pierre Bayard calls 'non-reading' (2008, p. xiv). Alternatively, she may have encountered a film or TV adaptation, although she cannot verify this fact. Sue's strongest memories of *Little Women* turn out in fact to be organized around the affective traces that connect memories of the book to a merchandizing tie-in: an 'Amy' doll she owned, which was bought from the Maltese factory nearby during her time abroad while her father was in service. It is this object, created to promote to Alcott's novel (it was one of four 'Little Women' dolls on offer) that has remained with Sue, rather than the literary text itself, a reminder that readers 'are not only conceivable as active, meaning-making individuals, but also as embodied, situated subjects' (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, 2013, p. 37).

Alongside the materiality of books, autotopography plays a part in shaping adult memories according to shadowy points of uncertainty. Paulina experiences a similar sense of distraction to Martha when she comes into contact with the cover art of an edition of L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) that she obtains to reread for my project. Interested in pretty dresses as a girl, and pursuing this interest in semi-retirement by running a fabric business, Paulina is primed to take notice of Montgomery's descriptions of clothing, and since her original copy of the novel had a plain green binding and no illustrations, her memories of Anne's clothes are vividly constructed in her reading scene through imaginative visualization. In contrast, the 1964 Penguin edition she rereads presents her with a picture of

Anne in her Sunday School outfit on the front cover. Paulina's response reflects her autotopographical journey towards enjoyment and expertise in dressmaking, and also a kind of indignation at the fact she is forced to deal with what she considers to be an inaccurate image:

> The dress is supposed to be a stiff black and white checked satin, but the illustrator clearly did not understand what that would have looked like. Because the checks, those checks are huge, I mean they're more like a chess board, I mean that's not the sort of check you would have got on a dress at that time, or a fabric at that time, that was then used to make up a dress.

Paulina find gaps, not just in her thwarted memories of the text but in what she sees as an unacceptable false rendering of a key image in her reading scene. Her comments partly rely on adult knowledge of fabrics and fashion style built from a childhood interest through to professional practice. I would suggest that much of this particular response also reflects a common dismay felt when the physical book does not match the mental images previously conjured through initial reading and concretized through memory.

The disparity between Paulina's vivid interior imagining of Anne's dress and the public, commercial reality of the reprinted book cover, produces what at first glance might seem like an overly fastidious response (after all, few implied readers would know much about the size of check used in early twentieth-century North American dress fabrics). Further scrutiny of her rereading account reveals a common theme, however; not just in her interest in fashionable dresses (which of course, mirrors Anne's own delight in pretty things), but also her rebellion against her mother's taste in clothing and in literature. This theme can help to explain her concern with mismatched detail between original childhood book and adult rereading text. Paulina notes in our initial conversation that until she read *Anne of Green Gables* she had never enjoyed the books that her mother had recommended ('my mother's other great love was Dickens who I loathe, always loathed'), and makes an interesting comparison between her own relationship with her mother and the heroine Anne's relationship with her adoptive mother, Marilla:

> Because my mother never allowed me to wear anything frilly or puffed sleevey or (laughs) the sort of clothes that I would have liked to have wear [*sic*]. I never had a party dress, for instance. I always wanted a party dress (laughs). Whether or not I had a party to go to, I would just like to have a party dress [. . .] My mother always dressed me in very, very plain things. So yes, very similar. Um, no wonder my mother liked the book so much, cos she would have related very much to Marilla. In fact there's quite a lot of Marilla in my mother (laughs).

Although she does not talk in terms of identification, it is clear that Paulina sees her own struggles with her mother in the character development of Anne and Marilla, and uses aesthetic taste and propriety as the codes to explain her own affective ties to this novel. Taking an autotopographical approach to such a reading history, it would be possible to probe Paulina's earlier response to the 'wrong' depiction of the checked satin and interpret it according to her proprietary sense of the text as she first encountered it and the central role that clothing played, both in her concretization of Montgomery's novel, and also in her own sense of selfhood as 'other' to her mother.

Remembered details that initially seem to be irrelevant or too idiosyncratic to take into account can reveal some of the shadow that lies beyond manifest content, pointing – albeit obliquely – to the force of childhood books across the lifespan. In the following discussion of reading histories featuring translated and transmediated texts it is the act of noticing, by the remembered child and the remembering adult, that brings to the surface some of the meaning of the reading act. I start by returning to Simon's account of his childhood book, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, first discussed in Chapter 2.

Translations and transmediations

In his account of remembering, Simon provides evidence that he was an attentive reader as a boy. He noticed that the language used in *The Swiss Family Robinson* was old-fashioned and deduced that it was the account of happenings in the past (around 1800, he thought). Yet his account of rereading this novel is fraught with anxiety and confusion. First, he is forced to overturn his fervent belief that Wyss's novel was 'true and not made-up', a belief which he maintained from childhood into remembering the novel as an adult, one that is shared by other remembering adults: J. Hillis Miller similarly reports thinking as a boy that 'the words on the page were a true report of events at a place that actually existed somewhere' (2004, p. 79). Simon also discovers on rereading that the text he encountered as a boy in the early 1950s is a translation (as is the one he comes to in adulthood), although as he puts it 'at the time this would have meant nothing to me'. These beliefs and responses, maintained through memory over the life course, reflect a consistent fantasy of the transparency of the text to represent no more than what is 'on the page'. This works in terms of narrative events and with regards to language itself. Rereading reveals gaps, additions, and disorienting transformations in what Simon considers to be a paracanonical text he thought he remembered well. The strangeness he experiences is not so much a matter of disparity between child and adult selves, such as is in evidence in the reflections of Laura Miller that I touched upon in the last chapter; rather, it is the shadow cast by completely new material overlaid upon memories of the original. Simon writes, however, with an increasing sense of certainty in his own recollections and awareness of the instability of the text: 'This sounded to be what I wanted but on reading it is clearly not'; 'I didn't know any of this – that the original book was unfinished'; 'I do not remember this at all'; and 'I definitely have no memory of this and really believe it was not in my book'. By the end of the reread, he has realized that he is in possession of a different edition to his childhood one, not just that the print is bigger and the engravings that featured at the start of each chapter are absent, but that the story itself, and the language used to write it, have metamorphosed from the text initially formed within his reading scene.

Written by Wyss as a form of creative response to *Robinson Crusoe* and based on the stories he told to his family – and thus partly collaborative, episodic and makeshift in nature from the start – *The Swiss Family Robinson* has 'proved immensely inviting to adaptation', according to Karen Sánchez-Eppler (2011, p. 437). Indeed, for Lathey, it is one of the 'intriguing instances where a translation becomes far more popular than the source text' (2010, p. 208) and her comment might be extended to cover all forms of popular transformation of Wyss's work. Its publishing history reflects most dramatically the textual instability of a children's classic, as noted by Zohar Shavit: the original manuscripts were edited and published by Johann David's son Johann Rudolph in 1812/13, followed a year after by a fairly free French translation of the two volumes by Mme la Barronne Isabelle de Montolieu, and both German and French versions were used in William and Mary Godwin's first English edition of 1814, titled *The Family Robinson Crusoe*. In the years after this initial foray into the world of children's literature, *The Swiss Family Robinson* was adapted, retranslated, expanded and developed so many times that John Seelye has argued that it 'resembles the adventures of the family themselves, in that it is a communal, even corporate, product' (1990, p. 5). Subsequent retellings of the story – begun by de Montolieu, continued by many others, and incorporated into English translations – extended Wyss's original narrative so that it no longer ended with the family left isolated on the island, philosophizing about the value of their mode of self-sufficiency and reliance on 'providence', instead offering closure in a rescue and return to home, and the additional character and plot devices of a missionary, natives, and a castaway English girl to

provide romance as well as a distinctly enhanced Christian subtext.

It is no wonder that Simon's account of rereading is peppered with contradictory details where memory and text do not match up. To take part in my project he obtains a copy of one of the extended transformed adaptations of Wyss's source text, published in 2010 by *readaclassic.com*, probably using the 1910 Everyman Library text by an anonymous translator published by Dent. Simon soon discovers that this is not the same in language or in content as his original childhood book, which was probably a copy of the 1879 shortened English translation of de Montolieu's French version completed by Agnes Kinloch Kingston under the name of her husband, William Henry Giles Kingston. (Simon's original childhood book is no longer in his possession, but he notes in email correspondence with me that it probably came from the collection of Victorian novels left in the family house his parents bought in the 1940s and verifies with his brother that the version they read included an episode in which a donkey is 'eaten whole by a giant snake'; this is the wonderfully gruesome and memorable account of Grizzle's demise included in Kingston's translation, among others.) Like Martha drawn to the new illustrations of her paracanonical Blyton book, Simon is provoked to focus on what is different, new, and 'wrong' in his rereading. His rereading notes proliferate around the parts of the narrative he 'does not remember at all' and the account becomes a refrain of excess and of absence: 'I do not remember anything about a rescue'; 'no memories of this storm and lightening'; 'map of the island – not in my edition'; and 'the mother's fall – new to me'. He also states that the contemporary edition 'refers to God whereas I remember Providence being used'. The plot elements, illustrative map, and language that he identifies as superfluous to, or inconsistent with, his memories represent some of the most conventional features of the text: codes that might, in fact, be expected to feel familiar in a more general and generic sense. But the sense of disparity is too strong for Simon to reread them without resistance. They are shadows, or rather black holes, pulling the remembering reader into unfamiliar and uncomfortable zones.

Not all rereadings of translated texts in new editions result in such confusion, although memories of 'foreign' books do multiply the strangeness of childhood reading as part of a historically felt experience and an insight into earlier, less-informed reading experiences, as Victoria's accounts reveal. Victoria agrees to remember and reread Spyri's *Heidi* for me, which she first discovered as a girl of eleven in the early 1960s. The novel was initially published in German in two parts: *Heidis Lehr-und Wanderjahre* (1880) and *Heidi kann brauchen, was es gelernt hat* (1881), and then in an anonymous English translation as *Heidi's Early Experiences* and *Heidi's Further Experiences* (1884). Later English-language translations dropped the lengthy subtitles, sometimes cut the second volume, and usually published the text under the simple title, *Heidi*. Victoria buys the 2002 Kingfisher Classics edition to reread for my project, which was based on Eileen Hall's 1956 translation and divided into two parts corresponding to the original German titles: 'Heidi's Years of Learning and Travel' and 'Heidi Makes Use of What She Has Learned'. Although she is seemingly unaware of the original nature of the text as written in German, Victoria acknowledges that as a child she responded to the fact the story was set in a different country: it 'made it exciting to read and a little hard in understanding, having to read and remember unusual names and place names'. Lathey argues that it is the combination of a 'traditional Swiss village story' with a 'strikingly modern portrait of an unstable young girl' that has made the text such an enduring favourite among international audiences (2010, p. 129); Victoria's reflections support the idea that the exotic location and empathetic heroine were attractive to her, and that the translation she encountered balanced these elements in a way that appealed to her tastes.

Victoria does refer to her awareness of the 'foreignness' of this childhood book, then, even if the plurality of forms that translated versions might take is not obvious to her. In her remembering account she picks up in particular on the unusual word 'dirndl', which describes a traditional Alpine skirt, and

which she claims to recall appearing in Spyri's text because it was 'strange' to her and helped her to realize that she knew 'very little of the world and its people'.[2] On rereading, however, she discovers that the term does not occur in the edition of *Heidi* she has selected. An aura of uncertainty surrounds this minor detail in the account: did Victoria read a different translation as a child, one that did use the German term to add local flavour to the text?[3] Or did she insert the word 'dirndl' into the remembered story herself, recognizing the cultural markers that connect the description of Heidi's clothing in Hall's translation – 'two frocks, one on top of the other' (Spyri, 1956/2002, p. 15), one of them her 'best dress' (p. 27) – to the information about forms of traditional dress that she may have encountered in her classroom, through other transmediated versions of *Heidi*, or elsewhere in her life space. It is quite possible that the interesting word itself, which invites speaking out loud, ensures that it is lodged in Victoria's memory, as is the case for another participant, Megan, who remembers encountering the word 'diaphanous' while reading Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) for her O Levels. Meagan retains a clear sense of this term relating to a piece of ham in that novel, but similarly she discovers on rereading that it does not actually appear in Hardy's text. The dirndl skirt is also related to Victoria's ongoing pleasure in clothing, and, like Paulina's interest in Anne of Green Gable's outfits, these aesthetic details are as important to her as the story of Heidi's psychological development. Victoria recognizes that much of the aesthetic force of the reading experience is developed within the imaginative workings of the reading scene rather than in the reality of the text. For instance, the Kingfisher cover, illustrated by Angelo Rinaldi, shows the colours of the flowers in the meadows as yellow, but she explains that she had distinctly remembered them as pink, probably 'because it was my most favourite colour as a child'. Similarly, her interest in the dirndl skirt can be interpreted as a reconstructive strategy, focusing remembered reading on such distinctive images of exotic clothing.

Lathey points out that 'memories of childhood readings of [*Heidi*] centre on an idealized, wholesome Swiss landscape suffused with sunlight and pure mountain air, home to a quixotic child at one with nature' (2010, p. 129), although she does not provide specific examples of these adult responses. She goes on to note that 'Spyri's novel is far more complex than this scenario suggests, especially in the Frankfurt scenes that many adults seem to have forgotten' (p. 129). Victoria does recognize this complexity in her adult rereading account; however, she admits that she had remembered 'very little of Heidi's time in Frankfurt' from her childhood reading. In this way, she situates her younger self as more naïve and less able to understand the intricacies of an adult viewpoint than her current reading self. In contrast, academic Laila, who is in her late twenties when she agrees to participate in my project, remembers the Frankfurt sequence from a childhood reading and describes her eleven-year-old self as acutely aware of the change in atmosphere and ideology between the two parts of Spyri's work. She recalls disliking the 'boring lectures on religion in the book's second half' and, although she can now recognize more successfully the complexity of the themes that emerge in the novel, she finds rereading the latter parts of *Heidi* in adulthood as 'boring' as in her younger years. Unlike Simon and Victoria, she is also alert to transformations the text has gone through, which seem to her more stark than any development in her own reading identity.

It is important to note that Laila could not read German as a child and her first reading of the book *Heidi* as an eleven-year-old was an English translation (probably the 1980 Windmill edition), in a sense a rereading of an even earlier encounter with the Japanese anime series, *Heidi, a Girl of the Alps* (1974), and thus she had already gone through a process of reassessing her younger reading self before her participation in my project. She watched this series when she much younger, living in Germany where it was very popular. Since the TV title sequence she recalls depicts key imagery of the 'Arcadian idyll' of Heidi's Alpine days in a classic anime style that emphasizes bright colour and cute characters, it is not

surprising that she remembers feeling a 'cold douche' of disappointment when she read the novel in full as a pre-teen and encountered its darker and more didactic second volume. Laila's accounts move from initial familiarity with the adapted cartoon form to exposure to the translated version of Spyri's original German-language text, pointing to ways that texts evolve within the reading scene, and highlighting the fact that remembered childhood books work within a broad culture of artefacts. This sequence reflects what Lathey describes as a process of 'reinterpretation in multiple forms', which is signalled by the shift towards the single-name title *Heidi* that acts as 'icon for multiple abridged, film, television, and animated versions' (2010, p. 129). Laila admits that the 'pop culture image of Heidi on a mountain, amidst a pastoral otherworld', which had been part of her infant consumption of fiction, had begun to reassert itself through a kind of folk communal memory into adulthood, despite her knowledge of the more complex version she had read as an eleven year old. On rereading the novel for my project, it is no longer the second half that comes as a surprise to Laila's reading self, but the beginning, in which 'nothing was so bland' as she had remembered. Reversals of expectation often cross over with experiences of remembered reading that beyond the original childhood book into adaptations and other types of transmediated intertexts.

I will come back to this issue as it is represented in adult memories later in this chapter. Now I would like to move away from transformed texts and towards transformations inherent in the lifelong reading act. These can be caused by misremembering: that is, when rereading exposes material errors or absences in an account of remembering. This mismatch differs from the personal sense of dislocation engendered by changes in rereading attitude, that sense of difference between child and adult reading selves I explored in Chapter 4. Instead, it is the reading scene that is unveiled as changeable and unstable. Nevertheless, the reading self is still crucial to an understanding of misremembering. Where translations and transmediations reveal much about the potential strangeness of childhood books, memory failure dramatizes the strangeness of the reading scene as a reflection of readerly identity. Details lying under the surface remain central to understanding, and Freudian theory can be helpful here, alert as it is to slips, mistakes, and reconstructions. Crago's published rereading experiments also provide a useful model for this approach: as a trained psychotherapist himself, he points out that interpreting types of memory error as evidence of deeper suppression and conflation of the psyche is 'acceptable to psychoanalytic thought' (1990, p. 112).

Memory errors and misremembering

In 'Screen Memories', Sigmund Freud writes 'what is recorded as a mnemic image is not the relevant experience itself – in this respect the resistance gets its way: what is recorded is another psychical element closely associated with the objectionable one' (1899/1959, p. 307). I want to explore this sense of a mnemic image – or memory trace – overlaying an objectionable reality through a single case study. Although the focus is how misremembering functions in the gap between remembering and rereading accounts, some background to the participant in question is helpful to establish possible reasons for resistance.[4]

Jillie grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, during what is often called the Second Golden Age of British children's literature. Despite the wealth of literary material circulating during this period, her memories of early reading experiences are limited. She reports that she found learning to read painful and was not an avid reader for pleasure until her mid-teens. As a child, she enjoyed stories and being read to: she liked the 'safe and familiar world' of the often-read *Downey Duckling* because she knew it so well she

could recite it by heart and it therefore provided respite from having to interpret words on the page (see Chapter 2). She explains that she just 'didn't like reading'. Part of the reason for her reticence seems to have been the difficulties she faced in decoding and comprehension. Throughout her account of remembering she provides detailed information about her difficult process of becoming a reader, of the 'anxiety and fear of having to read at home and at school', and the way that memories of being punished for her poor performance in literacy continues to make her feel 'choked up'. Jillie also gives valuable insights into her own sense of lack in terms of the skills of reading for pleasure, explaining that although 'most children must miss things in the text when they read' she thinks she 'probably missed more than most'. She develops this idea through the concept of overlooking 'clues' in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) that would have aided her in making sense of the story and helped her to sink into it for enjoyment. The process of enchantment with the practice of reading and with individual books only began at the age of thirteen when Jillie found herself having to read thrillers aloud to her ill father and discovered that she 'wanted to actually read the next page, and the next page, and then carry on'. Her love of reading has since become firmly entrenched and she shares her love of books with the primary school children she teaches, although she still considers herself to be a poor decoder.

For my project, Jillie agrees to reread one of the books she encountered herself in primary school, aged about ten, at a point when she was clearly still unsure about her decoding abilities and when pleasure in reading was still hard to achieve for her. Her choice proves challenging for us both in practical ways as, although she recalls some details about the protagonist, storyline, some individual scenes, and the cover art, she cannot remember the title or author of this book. It is included in her paracanon due to the affective traces that connect the book to her reading scene: she remembers it primarily as a 'very emotional book about a boy that went blind' and recalls 'really empathizing' with the guide dog that helps him come to terms with his disability. At first she thinks her remembered childhood book must be one of Blyton's titles, but then realizes that Blyton's writing rarely evoked such strong emotions for her. The other book she remembers in similar terms from the same period in her life and considers rereading is Adams's *Watership Down* (1972), so despite her claims to be a weak reader, Jillie obviously had developed her own taste for affecting animal stories by this point as a young girl.

The first text we unearth as a contender for the 'emotional book about a boy who went blind' is an American novel called *Follow My Leader* published in 1957 by James B. Garfield, which Jillie soon discovers is 'definitely not the book'. One of the offshoots of this kind of research is being introduced to quite random texts you would otherwise have no reason to read, and our search for the mystery book is also a pithy reminder that reading histories are often messy things, partial and tentative, hiding as much as they reveal. It is in some ways surprising that more of the accounts I have worked with do not deal in these kinds of shadow texts, half-remembered yet unidentifiable. One explanation for this is that academics and memoirists will research such texts before writing about them, ensuring that their childhood paracanons can be named and identified; for general readers reporting to a research project, it is uncomfortable and unwieldy to discuss books without the tangible hook of a title or author.

Eventually, we discover Dorothy Clewes's little-known novel *Guide Dog* (1956) and, although the edition is not the same one Jillie borrowed from her friend as a girl, so that after reading the first page she worries that is going to be 'another dead end', she agrees on rereading the full text that 'it must be the same book'. If I were concentrating on Jillie's rereading attitude here, I would note that she displays characteristics of a renovationist stance, highlighting the differences between her remembered and very engaged childhood responses and her adult assessment of Clewes's novel. She reports disappointment because *Guide Dog* feels 'one-dimensional' in comparison with the children's literature she currently

loves reading and because it does not have the same 'impact' upon her as it did when she was younger; but she also recognizes that her skills in understanding plot development have improved in ways that have rendered the narrative less confusing – and, ironically, less emotionally involving. I shall look more closely now at the moments of uncertainty, misremembering, and errors in memory surrounding her account, to push beyond her own appraisal that as a child she had not read *Guide Dog* 'properly' and had feasibly got it 'totally wrong'.

There are a number of key aspects of Clewes's novel that Jillie brings up in her remembering account that can be evaluated against her account of rereading. She recalls the main protagonist being the 'same sort of age as me', living near the moors, and suddenly going blind. She recalls 'his resentment at everything, how he hit out, and he was angry' and focuses on his frustrating relationship with a guide dog he resents, which she thinks is a female golden retriever. Most vivid is her memory of one or possibly two specific scenes of high drama in which the bond between boy and animal is tested, one of which she thinks was also represented on the front cover of her original edition:

> He was horrible to this guide dog, he really resented it, he used to kick it and [. . .] then one day the guide dog saved his life. He was at the top of a cliff and he was kicking the dog, and someone came along and said, that dog stopped you falling off the cliff [. . .]
>
> I have a vision of a blond boy standing at the top of a cliff or tor with a pair of glasses on, to indicate he's blind I suppose [. . .] but with a golden retriever by him [. . .]
>
> I have another image of him walking along the road and falling. And that's when he lashed out at the dog because the dog hadn't warned him that something [. . .] or he hadn't listened.

While Jillie's image of the dog is proven to be fairly accurate – she is actually a female golden Labrador called 'Mick' – other aspects of this scene have been misremembered and have to be reconfigured as she rereads and reflects on the experience. Several details appear as familiar in the rereading, although they were not part of her active recollection: for instance, she recognizes the moment in which the protagonist, Roley Rolandson, is blinded by a parcel bomb, and also a subsequent episode when he is depicted in hospital talking about training to be a doctor; however, she is surprised to realize that Roley is nineteen years old, since 'in my mind he was no more than fourteen'. This kind of 'error' might be explained, not as a deficit of memory, but as remembrance of early reading encounters in which the reader fits the text more directly to their own situation. It is quite likely that eleven-year-old Jillie sought to make the text more relevant to her life and experience by aligning the main character's age more closely to her own, for instance.

Such processes of alignment are more significant when plot or character is played out in an imaginative projection onto the reader's life. As with the representational space I described in Chapter 2, this projection overlays textual events onto real-life contexts. According to Jillie's account of remembering, the suddenness of Roley's blindness in the novel provoked a good deal of reflexive thinking in her younger self, causing her to imagine that the same fate might befall her and encouraging her to play-act being blind by 'walking around with my eyes shut'. Her anxiety that, like Roley, she could wake up not being able to see is the major affective thread connecting her to the text, and being so intimately woven into fantasies about her own life and body it saturates other aspects of the accounts of remembering and rereading, even though Jillie claims that she did not 'get the same emotions at all from it really'. The falling incident represents a good example of the way in which this kind of implicated reading can work towards shaping textual memories and reforming the reading scene. Jillie comes back to the scene of falling several times: it is either on a cliff top or on a road, and in her remembering

account it is a climactic moment of high drama and risk. On rereading, however, she finds that the episode involves an altogether less dangerous incident. At the residential centre where he being trained to work with his guide dog, Roley has decided to take his first independent walk and during this outing he ignores Mick's canine guidance, walking into an off-bound area where drainage pipes are being laid, 'suddenly the lane was giving way underneath him. He flung his arms wide, clutching nothing as the ground came up at him with a slap of water' (Clewes, 1956/1964, p. 129). The scene is mildly dramatic and results in a change of heart from Roley, who begins to accept Mick's assistance and move towards positive growth in his new situation, but it hardly represents a life-threatening incident, nor does it feature any kind of cliff.

Jillie's minor memory error of the scene in *Guide Dog* could have been influenced by other, more dramatic literary or filmic moments where a hero is imperilled at the edge of a cliff or on a narrow ledge. Such merging of textual and extratextual content often occurs in the process of remembering childhood fiction, as I noted earlier. In some cases, the act of remembering conflates presentification of two or more textual episodes from the same book or merges episodes from different books or other forms of transmediated texts. This phenomenon is often evident in memories of series books, which can function in retrospect in some ways like a single narrative, but which also often include rich content of generic patterns and incidents that can easily be transposed across single titles. For example, Tom, remembering Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* (1930), recalls a specific section of the story where the young protagonists 'cut something and exchange blood'. Although this event does not occur in the fairly gentle adventures of the Walker children in this first novel in the sequence, there is an instance of blood mixing in Ransome's later *Secret Water* (1939). Tom may have read the whole series and merged mental images in his account of remembering, or he may simply have been adding detail from his own set or schema of generic expectations. Jillie insists that she cannot think of any other fictional instance of danger on a cliff top that might have resulted in her having 'merged the two stories together', although broader, generic images might have been in play.

Misremembering in this form can also be a result of merging memory images of early life events with the remembered book. An uncannily similar sequence of remembering and rereading is reported by Crago as part of his rereading experiment. In attempting an accurate reconstruction of the plot of one of his significant childhood texts, W. H. G. Kingston's *Old Jack* (1861), Crago misremembers one scene about a dead man set on a cliff-top, merging it with an earlier, much more powerful one, in which the hero's father dies. The subsequent, reconstructed scene is one filled with horror in Crago's memory. On rereading the novel in adulthood, he reports that the actual textual version now reminds him of his own grandfather's death, which his parents had avoided talking about when he was a child. Crago argues that his misremembering is a form of unconscious suppression of the painful autobiographical memory, and for Jillie too, the heightened emotion and anxiety she recalls feeling about the novel as a child and her practice of imagining the events of the narrative into the reality of her own existence, increases the likelihood that this moment of the protagonist slipping into a drainage ditch has been merged with existing fantasies of being blind and subsequently exaggerated in the reading scene.

The process can be likened to 'imagination inflation', a phenomenon in which richly made fantasies or imaginings become so vivid that they are recalled as autobiographical memories of personal experiences (Fernyhough, 2012, pp. 157–8). In remembering childhood books the process works slightly differently, since fictional content is already imagined rather than remembered autobiographically, but the same principle of memory reconstructed from imagination applies. Textual evidence from Clewes's narrative also invites speculation that a reader might be tempted to enhance the key moment of peril later in the lifelong reading act, since he or she has already been

encouraged to link Roley's dealings with dogs with the trauma of his blindness. In the first chapter, at the moment when Roley tries to deliver the package that explodes in his eyes, a dog runs up to the door and starts barking. He later transfers his anxiety from this single incident onto any encounters with dogs in general, so that when the idea of a guide dog is suggested he responds with terror: 'as clearly as if it were happening all over again he could feel the sudden impact of the heavy body, hear again the explosion ringing in his ears, see in his mind's eye the blinding flash. "A dog. I couldn't", he gasped' (Clewes, 1956/1965, p. 54). Remembering the dramatic impulses of this description and overlaying them onto what should be an exciting point of peril later in the story is certainly a plausible explanation for inflating the setting of a ditch to a thrilling cliff-top environment.

The spatial context for this reconstructed event – the remembered cliff – also works to situate this textual episode against a more general backdrop of high peril and epic drama, which in turn has to be reimagined in more down-to-earth terms when the scene is reread as occurring in rather mundane surroundings. Jillie recalls the cliff textually and also as part of the visuals of the front cover art. The 1964 US hardback edition published by Coward-McCann does feature quite an atmospheric cover, illustrated with a boy and dog walking through a dangerous-looking forest path. The British Hamish Hamilton edition of 1965 (which Jillie is perhaps more likely to have encountered) depicts no rural location, simply featuring a rather creepy close-up illustration of a dog. One of Peter Burchard's illustrations shows a boy walking with his dog across moors with hills in the background (Clewes, 1956/1964, p. 117). None of these images represents a cliff-top scene. As with scene construction theory, discussed in Chapter 1, this relocation of events to the 'top of a cliff' acts as a trope that allows Jillie to marshal actual details of the novel against scenery meaningful to her, and is no doubt one of the reasons that this otherwise unremarkable literary work has entered into her paracanon.

Those affective traces binding text to reading scene throughout the lifelong reading act are not always easy to identify or understand. There are not always good psychical explanations for why certain affective packages – of love, fear, or more ambivalent feelings – allow a childhood book to resonate over time and become paracanonical. Even more uncertain is why some books seem to be scratched away from the reading scene, either disintegrating in memory or disappearing altogether. In the last part of this chapter, I turn to precisely those forgotten objects and explore what it might mean to think about a lost paracanon.

Forgetting and *anamnesis*

Wendy Lesser rereads Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839) in anticipation of gathering material for her autobibliography, but in the process discovers she 'couldn't recall the slightest thing about the book itself' (2002, p. 5). She finds the experience curious yet not intellectually interesting enough for her study, and it leads her to suggest that successful rereading only takes place if a book can actually be remembered 'well enough to get something new out of the rereading' (p. 5). Forgotten books are, therefore, not included in her project. Clearly, there is some logic to this position since any comparison between *now* and *then* requires at least some point of connection otherwise it becomes meaningless. While a 'null result', such as Lesser's response to Stendhal's work, technically adds to findings from any rereading experiment, most rereaders (and researchers) are looking for more detailed insights into earlier encounters with books. Some elements of forgetting are still useful for any rereading endeavour, however. Victoria is 'quite pleased' about how much she had actually remembered about *Heidi* from her

childhood encounter, at the same time pointing out that 'there was enough forgotten that made my rereading very pleasurable and rather a roller-coaster for me'. As William Brewer argues, a great deal of the satisfaction of reading fiction comes from moments of suspense and not-knowing and, while rereading can pose a threat to this aspect of the experience, processes of forgetting and limited remembering ensure that readers may still be able to enjoy a book throughout their life course, especially when there is a long period between encounters (1996, p. 122). Remembering a childhood book in total fullness runs the risk of boring a rereader. There is delight in surprise as well as in familiarity and recognition.

Conversely, there can be vexation in the realization that matter has been forgotten. During our discussion about her memories of *Little Women*, Sue declares, 'I just wish I could remember more, it's rather upsetting', and although we subsequently discover that there is very good reason she cannot remember much substance, since she never read the novel in the first place, her distress at the apparent loss is not uncommon. Georgina makes a telling comment when she says that she had been 'feeling bad' for not remembering more about Falkner's *Moonfleet* (1898), a book she claims she read in the early 1970s around the age of eleven and loved as a child. Her reading history provides some clues as to why forgetting so much of *Moonfleet* feels painful. She was an enthusiastic reader as a girl, relating to me her remembered childly identity as 'the nutcase who read books', who considered books her friends and the small bookcase she owned her 'pride and joy'. Her paracanon is rich and diverse, ranging from illustrated classics such as Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) to Blyton's popular *Malory Towers* series (1946–51), and including adult texts such as *Jane Eyre*, which she read in her teens. She also has fairly rich textual and contextual memories of other childhood books, including *Heidi* (she recalls descriptions of 'wonderful fresh milk and cream' and the character of the 'lovely, big, bear-like grandfather'[5]) and *The Swiss Family Robinson* (she distinctly remembers making lists of unusual and archaic words that featured in the text). In contrast, she complains that although she can remember that she read *Moonfleet*, that there were descriptions of smuggling, good and bad men, and that it made her feel 'frightened and exhilarated', she 'cannot remember anything else about it'.

Georgina's forgetfulness is, in fact, neither unusual nor particularly severe: as Bayard has noted, the process of forgetting begins as soon as one starts rereading and is 'unavoidable' (2008, p. 47) and so it would be strange if some content had *not* been lost over time. She is also aware of some of the functionality of memory that might have inflected her own recollection of *Moonfleet*, especially the potential for merging and reconstruction, and she worries in our interview that she might be confusing Falkner's novel with Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. It is therefore the affective interpretative scheme that she brings to her accounts that reveals the extent of her forgetting and how the loss of memories of this paracanonical book sits within her sense of her lifelong reading act. In concluding her rereading account, Georgina writes, 'I had forgotten almost every incident in the book and given the awfulness of John's fate I am surprised and a bit shocked that I didn't recall more'; this shock of betrayal infuses her reading scene.

In this expression the idea of betrayal, a responsibility towards a loved object emerges, and the ethics of remembering are brought into play. Although the book she struggles to recall is at no risk itself from Georgina's failure to re-energize it in her reading scene, the idea that a beloved book that once provoked strong emotions has left almost nothing of its substance in reach feels like a form of treachery. This is a different form of betrayal to that proposed by Lynne Pearce, in which it is part of the 'sequel' of the reading romance, encompassing disappointment and disenchantment with a previously beloved text (1997, pp. 169–80; see Chapter 4); although for Pearce too, the reader is implicated in any failure of a textual relationship and has to 'face up' to her responsibilities through 'painful acknowledgement' (p.

171). Georgina's bad feeling can also be interpreted as a result of failing me as researcher, and not having enough material to present in her remembering account (she describes herself as 'hopeless', an assessment I am quick to refute).

I am making the case in this book for the importance of paracanonical texts in all their variety of effects on the reader: these are the books that recur in the reading scene across the life space, rather than those books that touch an individual only once and then are lost. It is also part of my argument that the influence of childhood books across the lifespan can be proposed and supported by their continued existence in the reading scene through rememberings and re-encounters. Why, then, attempt to interpret any kind of forgetting as part of the lifelong reading act? One reason is that forgetting can be understood as merely a hidden corner in the terrain of autotopography. There is always the possibility of emerging from this spot through remembrance at some later stage. This potential is acknowledged in wider thinking on memory: although Daniel Schacter subscribes to biological research suggesting that memory engrams 'fade away over time', he also admits that 'the idea that all experiences are recorded forever, requiring only a Proustian taste, sight, or smell to come dancing into consciousness, can never be disproved on purely psychological grounds' (1996, p. 78). Rosemary Sutcliff's memories of L. M. Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon* and Marcel Proust's fictional account of his hero rediscovering *François le Champi*, discussed in the Chapters 3 and 4, are founded on half-forgotten childhood books, properly recalled in the context of a younger reading self only through the process of triggering. Proust's hero stumbles across Sands's novel by chance on a library shelf (1927/2002, p. 191), and Montgomery's novel can only be set down in Sutcliff's autobiography in adulthood because one of her Canadian friends reminded her who wrote the work and sent her a copy in the post (Sutcliff, 1983, p. 97). Until that moment, *Emily* was practically a lost childhood book, and signified erased affective traces. Even more obscured in what she calls the 'murk' of memory, is Mackey's 'keystone book', *The Children's Wonder Book* (1933), which she only half-recalled in its material reality before she began her project, knowing, however, that she had encountered many of the classic stories, folk tales, fairy stories, legends and myths that are anthologized within it (2016, p. 209). She is subsequently reacquainted with it when she gathers up her mother's collection of children's books, although has to employ the services of an astute librarian to identify the title and publisher, since its cover and front matter are missing. She describes it as the 'most forgotten book' (p. 213) of all those she has been able to retrieve throughout her rereading odyssey, acknowledging that there may be others that have completely faded away in the 'murk' of her past. As with Lesser, she recognizes that rereading is constrained by having to remember earlier reading encounters in the first place, and notes 'it is inevitable that I have no idea what is missing' (p. 47).

What is not immediately apparent in accounts, either produced by my participants or published in autobibliographies and bibliomemoirs, is the body of work once read by children in the twentieth century but not remembered even in passing in their adult lives. Remembering that some childhood books are forgotten can be, in its paradoxical way, an opening for further research and memory work. Mark Currie explains the 'paradox of remembered forgetting' (2013, p. 155), noting how elusive forgetting really is since to remember an instance of forgetting is 'to fail to remember it as it was' (2006, p. 64). To remember even the title or front cover image of a childhood book is to fail to forget it completely. As well as acknowledging the provisional nature of forgetting, then, I also want to foreground the fact that it is a source of affective anxiety as well as a potential spur to action. Once more, I have focused primarily on the phenomenological practices of individuals, and the effect of remembering and forgetting on their personal reading scene across the life course. There is, however, a wider cultural question to be asked: are those forgotten texts worth remembering? Recent and contemporary literary scholarship works hard to reclaim and recover authors and texts that have fallen out of fashion or for reasons of ideology,

production, or reception, have been left without strong traces in the public consciousness. Is it necessary to try to do the same for forgotten childhood books on the level of individual reading histories, or is it enough to get mere glimpses of the gaps and fragments reported by ordinary readers, themselves for so long a hidden set of voices? I would not want to make claims that my project achieves the impossible and revives faded engrams. Nevertheless, if a childhood book can be thought of as a relic worth excavating, then not even recognizing that it is there, deeply buried, risks keeping the practice of early reading, and the former child him- or herself, hidden in oblivion (to turn Proust's formulation – discussed in the last -chapter – on its head).

If only to salve the fear that something important is forgotten and missing, it is worth exploring methods for accessing lost books in the interests of experimental phenomenological rereading research. As I have explained elsewhere, 'remembering, misremembering or forgetting can all be ways of noticing and acknowledging meaningful details about a book, a reading stance, or an affective response in childhood and beyond' (Waller, 2017b, p. 144). The method might be called *anamnesis*: that is, the conscious recalling of forgotten knowledge from a previous life. Drawn from Socrates's theory, recorded by Plato, that learning is simply a form of remembering information already gained in an earlier incarnation of the self, anamnesis can be applied in some parts to the process of remembering lost paracanons, the texts of which were part of the knowledge base and identity of younger selves. Some of my rereaders offer up strategies for proactive recovery of the past. Written records are suggested as useful tools: for example, Sue recognizes her tendency to forget quickly and easily and explains that she has 'got into the habit of keeping a note' about current books she encountered to avoid any further decay in knowledge of her reading history. Other written records – such as Joanna's diary of the series books she collected and read throughout childhood (see Chapter 1) – are invaluable sources for autobibliographers was well as for other researchers, and offer up new approaches to book history.[6]

Plato's method involves dialogue, so that the youthful student is helped to retrieve previous knowledge through careful and generous questioning by his tutor. For adults remembering childhood books, family members and peers or friends may offer the same service. Some defer to others to help them triangulate memories and excavate missing or forgotten texts from their childhood reading histories. Philippa confers with her daughter and negotiates a shared remembering account of *The Wind on the Moon* (see Chapter 4), while, on being asked what books he was reading alongside *Swallows and Amazons* as a boy, Tom says 'I shall have to ask my parents actually'. These tactics do not always work. Jillie's attempt to conjure her past reading through discussion with her mother simply reveals further gaps and silences. When she asks what books her mother used to read aloud to her, her mother apparently responds 'well I can't remember' and on further prompting, she reiterates 'well we didn't really have books and we didn't go to the library. So I don't remember'. The triple loss of tangible evidence here – the absence of physical books in the home, the impossibility of public records through library usage, and the fading of a communal memory shared with a parent – leaves Jillie in a potentially destabilizing situation and adds a further layer of meaning to the crucial position the books she *does* remember have established in her new reading history. My own practice as researcher aims to fill some of the gaps, probing memories of childhood reading through loosely structured workshops and open interview techniques,[7] and explicitly allowing for material in 'the murk', as Mackey would say, to rise to the surface when it can.

Conclusion

Not everything has to be remembered, or remembered in full, of course. Jorge Luis Borges's short story 'Funes, the Memorious' (1942) recounts the experiences of a man who has a complete and precise memory of everything he has ever experienced and encountered. The scenario in this story results in a chaotic and dysfunctional life for Funes because 'to think is to forget differences, generalize, make abstractions' (1942/1970, p. 94). Since modern theories of remembering are founded on the premise that past experience and knowledge must be reconstructed, the notion of absolute memory disrupts ideas of a logical and reasoned understanding of the world. Remembering every single detail from the full life course would prevent any possibility of sense-making. Friedrich Nietzsche goes further with his philosophy, arguing that 'he who cannot sink down on the threshold of the moment and forget all the past [. . .] will never know what happiness is' (1874/1997, p. 62). Not only is forgetting important for humans to fully function in the diurnal world, it is also a prerequisite for contentment. Where avid readers cannot retrieve books from their past, a certain amount of therapeutic 'letting go' might be encouraged. Kevin Crossley-Holland provides an anecdote that goes some way to demonstrating the drama that might entail from such release. In his memoir, he relates the guilty secret that he has held on to a childhood book borrowed from his local library for over forty years. As part of his repentance for this terrible sin, he takes a pilgrimage to his old village, not to return the book, which is itself lost and tragically forgotten ('I could see exactly how it looked [. . .] but I could no longer even remember what it was about or its name'; Crossley-Holland, 2009, p. 67), but to make penance by offering a full set of his own writings to be placed on the shelves in its stead. However, when he returns, hoping to avoid a gigantic fine from the librarian, Miss Hill, the library 'had simply vanished. The books all the books, the wooden barn that housed them, Miss Hill: they had all disappeared. There was just a gap – a hole in my heart – where they had been' (p. 67).

Seeking the shadows and probing instances of transformation and mutation offers up a different kind of analytical work to other chapters in this book by recognizing that lifelong reading is not constituted by processes of remembrance across the life course, but is complex, often messy and disputed, or even hidden from view. The model I carefully built in the first part of my study provides robust potential for childhood books to inhabit the reading scene in partial or deformed ways, or to draft outside its boundaries, promising to break through and surface into consciousness when the faculties of memory shift in some acute manner. What I hope this chapter has shown is that narratives of transformation, misremembering, and forgetting have as central part to play in a history of reading as those well-nurtured and well-rehearsed accounts of vividly remembered paracanonical childhood books. The space around the reading scene will always be bigger than the space within, and any shadows cast by the half-remembered, half-forgotten texts of the past that drift there add texture to our understanding of the lifelong reading act.

Notes

[1] The literal translation is 'Push-Me, Pull-You'.

[2] Victoria's youthful naivety in all things international can be compared with Philip Pullman's account of reading translated books in childhood, in which he claims that he 'felt at home' in 'the valleys and forests and coastlines' known to fictional characters from the Moomin books and *Emil and the Detectives*, and that he was 'European before I'd discovered whether I was English or British' (Pullman, 2001, p. 6).

[3] My searches of abridged and adapted versions of *Heidi* have not yet revealed an edition that uses the word 'dirndl'.

[4] I have avoided the term 'false memory' because of its association with false memory syndrome, which is primarily based in research about child abuse cases and is not appropriate for my study (see Loftus, 1993).

[5] Georgina might also be half-remembering the name of the brown goat, which features in the text: Little Bear.

[6] The Reading Experience Database includes a range of diary entries as part of its evidence base for forms of reading. The diary of Hilary Spalding, daughter of a clergyman, writing in 1943 is a good example.

[7] See Waller (2017b) for detailed information about this methodology.